

# **MOTHER – Meghalaya’s State Health Policy**

(For achieving **M**easurable **O**utcomes in **T**ransforming **H**ealth sector through a holistic approach with focus on women’s **E**mpower**M**ent)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Meghalaya has drafted a State Health Policy which will align with the National Health Bill, 2009 and the National Public Health Act, 2018 (draft) but will also include provisions which have been tailored to the State’s unique context.

The policy will set a broad framework for providing essential public health services and functions, including powers to respond to public health emergencies, principally through the State and local public health agencies at the village, Block and District level in collaboration with other public and private healthcare providers, including through the cooperation and formal collaborations between the Center and State.

The policy aims to ensure adequate investment in health and to increase health expenditure up to 2.5 percent of GDP. The policy will also address government and private areas investment.

Meghalaya has been successful in decreasing the number of malarial deaths significantly by capacitating grassroots frontline workers with a system of testing and treatment at a village level using ASHAs as barefoot doctors. Polio has also been completely eradicated from the State, however, the State fares poorly with regards to other health indicators in comparison to other developed states such as Kerala and the world in general.

The Infant Mortality Rate for Meghalaya is 30 deaths per 1000 live births compared to Kerala with 6 and the world with 29 (*source NHFS-4*); Maternal Mortality Rate is alarmingly high with Meghalaya registering 197 deaths per 1,00,000 deliveries, Kerala at 43. Mothers who availed antenatal care account for only 53.2 % in comparison to Kerala’s 61.2 %. (*SRS 2016-18*. Institutional deliveries in the State are at a very low level of 51.4 % in comparison to Kerala with a record 99.8%. Only 61.4 % of children between the ages of 12 to 23 months have been immunized compared to 82.1 % in Kerala. (*NHFS-4*)

The average life expectancy rate of citizens in Meghalaya is abysmally low at 62.3 years in comparison to the world at 72.6 years, United States of America at 78.9 years (*UNDP, 2018 report*) and Kerala at 74.9 (*Human Development Index, 2011*)

The policy aims to address the key health indicators by bringing about a positive healthcare model that would touch upon socio-economic determinants of its residents.

The positive health model will benefit the State and empower communities with the knowledge of how to better take care of their physical, emotional and mental health. Positive health model will work towards producing longer, healthier and productive lives by lowering disease risk and healthcare costs in the long run.

## **1.1 Vision**

*i) The policy aims to provide affordable, patient centric universal healthcare to all the residents while also educating the population on their rights and the availability of various preventive health services such as vaccines. The idea is for the population to become informed residents with the Health Department talking a proactive role in dissemination of healthcare services in the State in collaboration with all the stakeholders including the Departments of Social Welfare (ICDS), Education and Rural and Urban Development*

*ii) The policy will use techniques from the State Capability Enhancement Project (SCEP) which uses frameworks such as Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach, Adaptive Leadership Building and encouragement of Artificial Intelligence Enabled Decision Making. PDIA has been successfully utilized in the State's efforts with raising the immunization rates. In 2018-19, Meghalaya ranked lowest in terms of immunization rates; by using the PDIA approach, the State has now achieved 90 % immunization (Immunization Dashboard, July, 2020) and ranks second highest in the country.*

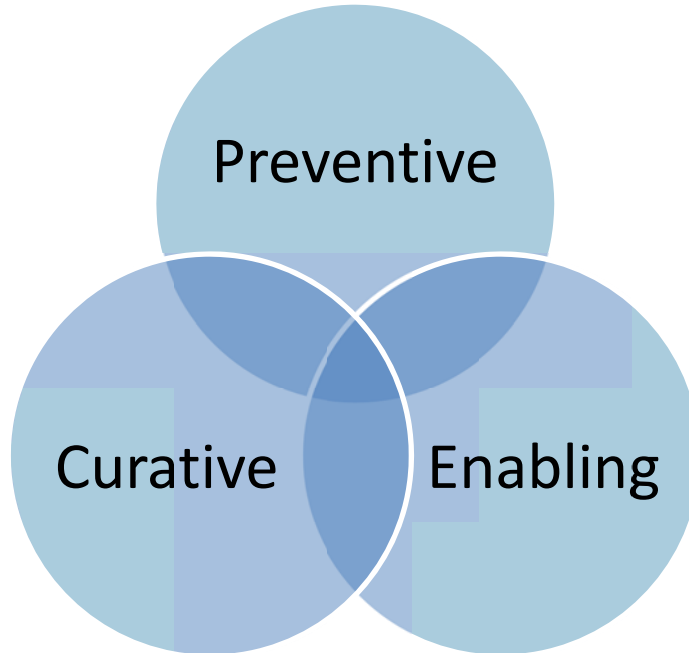
*iii) The policy will address the supply and demand side of healthcare with the supply side referring to healthcare providers and the demand side referring to the community where community mobilization will be put on the forefront. The policy will ensure that residents are seen and treated as producers of health and not just subjects of health.*

*iv) The policy aims to foster an environment where decentralization takes centre stage. The policy will break hierarchical barriers in healthcare administration so as to bring about a platform for open communication to discuss, deliberate and implement ideas.*

*v) The current healthcare policy which the State is practicing focuses on curative care; the new health policy will ensure that this focus equally shifts to preventive care in order to bring about a healthy and productive population.*

*vi) Although Meghalaya is a largely matrilineal society, persistent gender inequality and poverty are the root causes of many health concerns. The policy will aim to bring about the empowerment of women by ensuring health rights such as birth spacing and other reproductive rights. Creating awareness of women's rights is an important aspect to improving healthcare, and this along with empowering women by facilitating their economic independence will strengthen society as a whole. Women's health is not a standalone issue and needs to be dealt with in a holistic manner in order to remove societal gender barriers.*

**The health policy will follow a three dimensional model with equal focus on: Preventive Care which encompasses promotive care, Curative Care, and Enabling Dimension which encompasses palliative and rehabilitative care which will be discussed in the following chapters.**



*Fig.1 shows the three aspects of healthcare that will create a holistic policy with aspects interlinked with each other for overall wellbeing and creating agency among key stakeholders (Annexure 1)*

## **2. DATA AND TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN**

The State Health policy will aim to build a robust data architecture that will support development and implementation of health reforms. An electronic Health Information System (HIS) or electronic medical records will be set up to digitalize health records. The policy will combine these health records with other health and socioeconomic data collected by the state to present a holistic picture of health outcomes and related factors. Through these records, the State will have a large pool of data available which can be used as an instrument of positive health indicators while also evaluating the data for identifying any areas of concern. This system will be used to analyze data and create future predictions. The HIS will support effective documentation to its process and contents. All information on health related laws, policies, plans of action and programmes will be made available to the public, which should support engagement of both citizens and civil society organizations.

The policy will work towards implementing the Government of India's National Digital Health Blueprint which aims to provide efficient and affordable health coverage through a wide range of data and infrastructure services by leveraging open digital systems that will ensure security and privacy of personal information.

With technology being an integral part of the present and future, the State's health policy will encourage use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for problem solving and also predicting shortages and health needs of the population. Information Technology and data based decision making is already being used in the State as seen with the launch of the MOTHER App in 2019 which uses data of expecting mothers in the State and tracks the progress of the pregnancy while ensuring proper antenatal care and also encouraging institutional delivery. The app is also being used to alert high risk cases which can drastically reduce mortality rates. So far, grassroots functionaries such as ASHAs and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) have been trained to collect data and track said data.

To better implement the health policy, the State will focus on building a service delivery process which will enable the use of process maps for clear and precise implementation for better outcomes within a specific time period.

Healthcare will be made accessible to the remotest areas in the State with the propelling of services such as telemedicine, teleconsultation and the use of drones.

### **3. FOCUS ON RIGHTS BASED FRAMEWORK**

The ***Rights-based framework*** is a monumental step that the State is taking as it can empower residents and make the State more accountable. This approach will ensure that discrimination on any basis (gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) is unacceptable. The approach can also increase the scope on participation and inclusion and will warrant a more purposive sharing of information in the State. The framework will be strengthened by the *Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017* which is discussed in Chapter 6.3. This will enable a systematic process to share information to the public by the government. The sharing of information would include yearly household visits to generate awareness on how to access various services provided by the State.

The policy will provide residents with the right to seek and receive appropriate healthcare, right to emergency treatment and care, right to reproductive and sexual health care, right to quality and rational healthcare, right to choice where every user has the right to choose and change his/her health care provider and health care establishment, right to be treated by a named health care provider, referral rights, right to information about health care facilities, goods, services, programmes, conditions and technologies, right to medical records and data, and right to autonomy/ self-determination and prior voluntary informed consent which includes the right to refuse or to halt a medical intervention.

The State will also ensure the right to birth spacing where birth spacing is defined as the time between two consecutive pregnancies which is not less than 1000 days from day of conception. This will be implemented through the Mother and Child Protection strategy which is part of the larger State health policy which is elaborated further in Chapter 6.1. (WHO guidelines states that “After a live birth, the recommended interval before attempting the next pregnancy is at least 24 months in order to reduce the risk of adverse maternal, perinatal and infant outcomes.” )

The approach will ensure that importance is placed not only in outcomes but there is a systematic approach in following all the due processes and implementation mechanism. It will put focus on capacity development of both the duty holders (village, Block, District, State level) and residents claiming the rights.

## **4. PREVENTIVE CARE**

### **4.1 Focus on Public Health**

Public health will be the prime focus of this dimension in order to improve and protect community health and well-being. Public health policies such as vaccinations, family planning, water and sanitation can increase life expectancy. The current COVID-19 pandemic has proven that there needs to be special emphasis on public health as this can protect residents from health threats and prevent disease. Healthcare systems need to be strengthened by not only upgrading infrastructure but also ensuring qualified healthcare workers at every level and by building a public health cadre. Skill development programmes will also be conducted and a system will be put in place to ensure career progression of healthcare workers.

The policy will address the five pillars of public health namely *Epidemiology, Environmental Health, Health administration, Biostatistics and Health promotion and education.*

The policy will focus on human resource development, capacity building and ensure a proper regulatory mechanism for implementation of sanitary codes (water, food safety etc.) to bring about positive public health outcomes.

The State will proactively take measures to ensure the prevention of diseases and in cases where prevention is not an option, the State will facilitate care to manage illnesses and ensure that residents are equipped with measures and information to avail smooth palliative care.

### **4.2 Public Private Partnerships**

The State will explore innovative models for preventive healthcare similar to the Megha Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) which covers curative care. Here, the State will encourage

Public Private Partnerships (PPP) where there will be collaboration between public health institutions and private sector institutions to cover preventive care. The policy will allow for private insurance companies to enter the positive healthcare market on a trial basis.

Aspects such as immunization will be wholly covered by such partnerships and all players will be held accountable for achieving targets set by the State. The model will enable better population wide management and all aspects related to it.

The policy will lay down non-derogable principles to guide the public private partnerships with the objective to improve the quality of services delivered through public health systems. The State shall set conditions of service, monitoring, evaluation criteria, assessment and cancellation of PPP projects, which should be implemented by the State Public Health Authority.

The policy will also ensure that the State provides “*promotive care*” by addressing social and environmental issues and promoting health programmes and interventions that will benefit and protect individual people's health and quality of life by addressing and preventing the root causes of ill health and not just focusing on symptomatic treatment and cure.

#### **4.3 Strengthening the role of communities**

Initiative will be taken to strengthen the health cadres which will not only include healthcare workers but also grassroots mobilization of Self Help Groups (SHGs) which can have a vital role in strengthening healthcare in the State and will act as a last mile delivery institution for participation. SHGs can be trained to give awareness programmes and can serve as an important platform where community members participate in discussions on positive health practices and to improve health seeking behaviours for accessing the services provided by public health institutions. The policy will provide appropriate training for health personnel, including education and sensitization on health rights.

The policy will outline **Rights and Responsibilities** of the residents, which will encourage citizens to become active partners with the state rather than just beneficiaries of the system. The State aims to pioneer a bottom-up health system which is driven by the community and village organizations. Emphasis will be put on strengthening village health and sanitation bodies. Issues relating to gender inequality, gender violence and health will be taken up where various forums will be constituted at the village level and public health institution level.

There will be emphasis put on developing mechanisms for creating and empowering the decentralized monitoring committees at all levels, both rural and urban and seeking their feedback in a structured manner. The policy shall lay down rules for and establish

community-based monitoring frameworks, to strengthen the direct accountability of the health system to the community and beneficiaries, through a number of methods that shall include, formation of social audit and community health monitoring committees, preparation of annual public reports on health at Village, Block, District and State level.

The policy will put emphasis on training on vital issues such as Early Child Development (ECD) and will give awareness and training to expecting and lactating mothers to ensure the overall development of the child. By emphasizing on ECD, the issue of stunting will also be addressed. Stunting is a major cause of concern for the world as more than 220 million children are stunted or living in extreme poverty. 40 % of children under 5 are stunted in India. According to *NHFS-4* , 43.8 % of children under 5 are stunted in Meghalaya. Factors that contribute to stunted growth and development include poor maternal health and nutrition, inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, and infection. Stunting has long-term effects on individuals and societies, including diminished cognitive and physical development, reduced productive capacity, poor health, and an increased risk of degenerative diseases. ECD training is a long-term measure and investment that can combat stunting and reduce the number of future healthcare problems in the population.

#### **4.4 Inter-departmental convergence**

Issues such as nutrition, water, sanitation, poverty and gender will also be taken up as these are directly linked to various health problems in the State. The policy aims to foster a spirit of cooperation and collaboration between departments. Currently departments work in silos; the policy will encourage inter-departmental convergence in order to holistically tackle health concerns in the State. Through this convergence, the policy will ensure the adequate supply of safe water; ensure sanitation through appropriate and effective sewerage and drainage systems, waste disposal and management systems, pollution control systems, control of ecological degradation, control of insects and rodents and other carriers of infections.

The policy will highlight the importance of efforts to reduce poverty and gender inequality for removing barriers of social determinants of healthcare.

#### **4.5 Focus on nutrition**

The population in Meghalaya relies on a carbohydrate rich diet of predominantly rice and potatoes, the State would proactively encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and indigenous greens which are widely available in the State (*Annexure 2*). Apart from encouragement of healthy eating, the policy aims to also include propagating healthy lifestyles with awareness on the dangers of alcohol abuse, smoking and tobacco and the benefits of exercise.

The policy will ensure equitable distribution of and access to essential health facilities, goods, drugs, services and conditions to all, and especially for vulnerable or marginalized groups. The policy will also ensure access to the minimum essential food which is nutritionally adequate and safe, to ensure freedom from hunger and malnutrition for everyone.

#### **4.6 Focus on Physical Fitness**

The policy will put importance on physical fitness and exercise such as yoga, walking, cycling etc. which can protect residents from heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure. It can also aid in memory and brain function and improve mental health by reducing anxiety.

The policy will also address indoor and outdoor pollution and will take steps to reduce stress and improve safety in work spaces.

### **5. CURATIVE CARE**

This is provided by strengthening and promoting public health institutions and all other healthcare institutions including the private sector. Efforts will be made to bring Indian Institute of Public Health standards to provide quality services in all 3 levels of healthcare namely primary, secondary and tertiary care.

The policy will ensure that CHCs are the First Referral Unit (FRU). Trauma centres will also be given special importance and will be made available.

Curative care is largely covered in spirit by MHIS which provides universal healthcare to all residents. MHIS utilizes the existing RSBY framework to provide health insurance to all persons that are residents of the State excluding state and central government employees. The Scheme provides insurance cover of up to Rs 5,00,000 per family on a floater basis meaning that the total amount can be used by one person or jointly with other members of the family.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) has had certain limitations in Meghalaya as its definition of “deprivation” covers only 3, 47, 000 residents of the population. Because of this reason, MHIS has converged with PMJAY to offer a wide range of health benefit packages that can be availed by the entire population.

MHIS offers 2,382 services to its users in comparison to PMJAY which offers 1,400 services. Both schemes use the same IT platform. An ambitious aim of the policy is to address the invisible costs which are borne by residents after the exhaustion of the MHIS cap.

The links to the services offered by MHIS are attached below:



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[..\Downloads\SCHEDULE4.e94c2ab6.pdf](#)

With the policy, the State will address the issue of health seeking behaviours of residents. Resident usually visit healthcare establishments only after their illnesses have significantly progressed, which makes cure difficult and adds significant burden on tertiary facilities; the policy will encourage residents to visit healthcare facilities more often and establish a relationship with local health service providers who can detect and address ailments early and effectively. The aim is to inculcate a culture of regular checkups. Milestones can be used for encouraging this behaviour; for eg. Women on reaching a certain age can be encouraged to get a yearly mammogram checkup. Men can also be encouraged to get a prostate exam on reaching a certain age.

A **lifecycle approach** will be adopted by the State whereby healthcare will be ensured for all residents from the time of conception and will be categorized into different categories such as neonatal, new born, toddler, pre- schooler, school age child, adolescent, adulthood. Various health parameters have been identified which will be used as indicators to measure positive health and cognitive skills (*Annexure 3*).

### **Training of doctors on public health and all critical specialties**

The policy will aim to address the critical gap of lack of public health cadre in the State by setting up of a Public Health Academic and Research Institution in collaboration with the Public Health Foundation of India. The policy will encourage research and evaluation to form a continuous cycle of feedback and improvement. The State through the *Design and Adoption of Alternate models for Responding to Shortage of medical specialists (ADARSH)* project will facilitate the training of specialists in district hospitals which will act as training institutes for post graduate courses.

## **6. ENABLING DIMENSION**

### **6.1 Maternal and Child health Protection Policy**

The policy will include a strategy to deal with the unacceptably high Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR); the policy will address all issues regarding pregnancy and delivery with special emphasis on clinical, public health and socio-economic solutions to help reduce the number of fatalities. The State has already developed the innovative MOTHER app which tracks the pregnancy of women in the State; through this app, expecting mothers are getting proper antenatal care which can then facilitate safe deliveries.

The three important dimensions for reducing the maternal and child deaths that will be addressed through the policy are:

- i. **Clinical Management:** This implies availability of trained birth attendants and specialists to cater to pregnancies in remote areas. This also implies the availability of medicines and other clinical management tools and capabilities to prevent and reduce maternal and child deaths. The policy will ensure high quality antenatal care needs to be given to all the expecting mothers during all 3 trimesters and after the birth of the child. Data has shown that many deaths occur due to untimely intervention by healthcare professionals due to delayed visits to health institutions. Such evidence can be used to formulate and test interventions that can work in the local context. For instance, a simple instruction of requesting expecting mothers to visit the local PHC/CHC or any healthcare institutions on their expected date of delivery (EDD) irrespective of whether they are having labour pains can greatly reduce the risk to both mother and unborn child. The policy will also ensure timely availability of ambulances ,improvement of referral system and training of available manpower.
- ii. **Public Health Dimension:** AAA convergence model of public health action will be strengthened; in addition to ANMs and ASHAs, Anganwadi workers are essential in tackling the problem of high maternal mortality rates. They currently provide supplementary nutrition to pregnant women but their role could be expanded to respond to local challenges. Trainings will be imparted to AAAs to expand their role where they are able to cater to various other needs of expecting mothers including counselling on family planning. This aspect will lay emphasis on improving the quality of ANCs to ensure reduction in MMR as well as IMR. Through this team of frontline workers, a number of local issues can be addressed such as correction of anaemia in pregnant women, compulsory registration of first pregnancies, regular VHNDs, and use of various forms of contraceptives to practice birth spacing.

Public health infrastructure will be revamped to ensure proper equipment, hygienic beds and labour rooms are available at all levels of healthcare services. Data has shown that the State has a high number of home births which is also a cause of concern and it is imperative that institutional deliveries be encouraged so that mother can receive proper care during and after childbirth. One of the avenues for encouraging institutional deliveries is to improve the quality of health institutions from sub-centre level.

- iii. **Socio-Economic Dimension:** This implies the need to make people aware of the prevailing situation while providing proper counselling services and initiating dialogue and conversation around two main issues- Teenage Pregnancy and

Multiple Gravida. Both types of pregnancies fall under the category of unintended pregnancies and are high risk. Around 40 percent of deliveries in the State fall under this category. The sensitization process should be driven by the concept that every child as well as mother requires at least 1000 days of undivided time and care. This will not only ensure a holistic development of the child's brain but also increase his/her chances of survival in future. In the meantime, the mother will also be able to regain her health before another pregnancy.

The modalities to implement the policy to save the lives of mothers and children are as under:

1. Need for maintaining a 1000 day window and significance of Birth Spacing measures to effect the same.
2. Convergence between different grassroots healthcare workers including ASHAs and Anganwadis as well as various government departments.
3. Constitution of Health and Gender forums involving village level women SHG federations.
4. Constitution of PDIA committees in each District headed by the DCs, which would have participation of district level heads from all the concerned Departments and the NGOs/ Missionaries working for the health sector. The committee will be responsible to diagnose problems and implement ideas in an iterative manner. All the district committees will convene together quarterly to share experience and ideas and measure the objective and key results.
5. Setting up of Counselling Camps and necessary training to teachers and counsellors on how to sensitize masses about sex education and the right message to be spread.
6. Training grassroots healthcare workers as well as doctors so they are able to give out effective messages to people in terms of birth spacing, significance of 1000 day window as well as diet diversity.

The State Government's main objective with regards to this policy is to save the lives of mothers and infants with a larger objective of improving the life expectancy of people in the State while attempting to break the social stigma associated with use of birth control measures as well as the taboo surrounding discussion of teenage pregnancies.

## **6.2 Awareness and capability building**

The enabling aspect will include counselling camps and centers will be set up which will educate the public on various issues such as teenage pregnancy, multigravida, right to birth spacing, child care, nutrition, immunity etc. A curriculum will be developed by relevant experts in consultation with Medical Experts. Sex Education will also be made mandatory and topics such as birth spacing will be discussed so that the public can be made aware of the dangers and consequences of consecutive births. Teenage pregnancy and Multiple Gravida has been identified as key factors for high maternal and infant mortality rates. As

per the State data, teenage pregnancy accounts for 10% and Multiple Gravida accounts for 30 % of the total pregnancies in Meghalaya. It is important that during teenage years, high quality teaching and learning about a broad variety of topics related to sex, exploring values and beliefs about topics and gaining the skills that are needed to navigate relationships and manage one's own sexual health. This will enable the individual to understand the dangers of teenage pregnancy and gain knowledge on the physical, mental and emotional consequences of sex.

The policy will also enable counselling for sexually active couples by Medical Officers/public health nurses/ trained counsellors; this will ensure that residents are made aware of issues such as family planning, contraceptives, sexual health and consent. This will bring about better overall health and wellness and a more socially conscientious population.

Given the complex, multidimensional nature of the problem, it is imperative that the State mobilize several departments and stakeholders to make meaningful progress. The Education Department will have a proactive role in spreading awareness and ensure that the curriculum is taught in all schools across the State. Communities will also be sensitized along with grassroots organizations such as SHGs to ensure that the wider public is informed and educated on the abovementioned topics. In order to further spread awareness, youth camps will be held periodically by the Youth and Sports Department.

The policy will provide education and access to information concerning the main health issues in the communities, including methods of preventing and controlling them, and promoting healthy lifestyles, through sustained, and regularly updated national, State and local level IEC programmes

The policy will devise, adopt, implement, and periodically review, health policies, strategies and plans of action, on the basis of epidemiological, sociological and environmental and evolving scientific evidence, addressing the health concerns of the whole population.

The policy will address other public health measures towards ensuring health and wellbeing of all, including physical, emotional and mental health.

### **6.3 Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017**

Under this Act, village and locality level Social Audit Committees (SAC) have been formed to bring about transparency and accountability in healthcare. The SAC will monitor and evaluate healthcare related programmes which can lead to better performance. The Social Audits shall be conducted at village and institutional levels including the PHCs/CHCs to improve the quality of services and to increase the awareness and uptake of services by the communities with special focus on helping the poor and marginalized in accessing their due health entitlements. This social audit mechanism would enable the general public and

various groups and organizations to give free and independent feedback about health care services.

The Social Audit body would record the issues and where possible immediately recommend actions regarding cases of denial of health care or violation of rights enumerated herein or suggest follow-up actions by the parties; similarly it would recognize service providers acknowledged for providing exemplary good services.

The concept of Granular Performance Monitoring may be used to ensure accountability by clearly identifying roles, responsibilities and deliverables for every duty holder.

#### **6.4 Early Childhood Development (ECD) Mission**

ECD apart from being a preventive measure is also has an enabling dimension. It is important to note that the period of ECD (prenatal to age 8) determines physical, socio-emotional, motor and cognitive development in a child. It is imperative that the child be provided with proper nutrition and care; the environment of the child is also equally important where it should be taken into account the child's emotional needs. Toxic stress in children is an aspect which needs to be properly addressed as this can cause lifelong problems in learning, behaviour along with physical and mental health problems. It has been found that maltreatment of children in the early years precipitated physiological changes in the body that continues into adult life.

Sensitization and awareness programmes can be given on the importance of care during this crucial time at the grassroots level with focus on issues such as stunting, malnutrition, special needs and cognitive development.

Stunting can happen in the first 1000 days of life and is caused mainly by severe under-malnutrition which is most common in middle or low income countries and harm children's physical and cognitive development. Prenatal nutrition is of utmost importance along with proper nutrition for the mother. It can be noted that there should be due importance given on a mother's touch. The concept of kangaroo mother care which emphasizes on skin to skin care and touch is to be encouraged for the development of a child. Exclusive breast feeding in the first 6 months is also an important aspect of development as this leads to stronger immunity, lower diarrheal and other GI infections, greater growth in weight and height, a lower likelihood of transmission of HIV to the child; all these factors are in turn linked to higher cognitive skills.

With regards to motor skill development, there are two aspects: fine skills which involve small muscles which are linked to functions such as grasping and gross skills linked to functions such as crawling. The timing of when children reach these motor milestones measures their development which will be addressed by the ECD Mission.

## **6.5 Palliative and Rehabilitative care**

The policy will ensure the provision of *palliative care* which is specialized care for patients that are terminally ill. It focuses on providing patients relief from pain and other symptoms of a serious illness.

The policy shall also address *rehabilitative care* by ensuring healthcare services that will enable patients to regain any physical, mental or cognitive abilities that have been lost. The purpose is to return a patient back to a normal, healthy condition, whether it is following an illness, injury, surgery or certain disorders. The policy will also cover drug rehabilitation and care for mental illness.

# **7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

## **7.1 Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) and Adaptive Leadership Building**

The State will use an adaptive development approach inspired by frameworks such as PDIA and Adaptive Leadership Building. This approach aims to actively engage at a cutting edge level government functionaries including Medical Officers, frontline workers, civil society, grassroots organizations and CHCs & PHCs, and build their capability to collaborate with the State on all aspects of the decision-making process such as problem diagnosis, policy design, implementation and evaluation.

Both frameworks will work in tandem with one another and the focus will remain on identifying local problems which matter to residents and coming up with local solutions. The process allows for learning and adapting on a real-time basis. This approach will help build a healthcare system that is more accountable and responsive to the needs of the population.

## **7.2 Decentralized Catalytic Leadership approach**

The policy will follow a Decentralized Catalytic Leadership (DCL) approach which will be implemented at the CHC and PHC level. Maternal and Child Mortality reduction plans will be developed at this level and there will be monthly reviews of objectives and key results.

The Block Development Officers (BDO) will act as enablers who will oversee matters related to poverty and gender inequality. The Medical Officers (MO) will provide the supply side interventions whereby the focus is on clinical management and public health action. The Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) will ensure that demand side interventions are fulfilled. The CDPO will focus on key issues such as nutrition, anaemia, immunization and ASHAs and Anganwadi workers will conduct joint visits to ensure proper antenatal and postnatal care.

The DCL approach will be anchored by women SHGs known as MOTHER community platforms. Women will take up leadership roles and demand for services will be created through Health and Gender forums which will be formed at every village. Through this approach, an auto catalytic leadership process will be facilitated within communities where health social capital will be built in a systematic manner over a period of time through the women SHGs which will promote positive health within their families and communities. This approach will promote massive community participation where women will drive the change in health seeking behaviours and assist in improving health indicators.

### **7.3 State Public Health Authority (SPHA)**

In accordance with the National Health Bill, 2009 (draft), the State shall also set up a State Public Health Authority (SPHA) which shall lay down the rules for its own functioning and discharge of its responsibilities and shall carry out a wide number of functions as laid out in the Bill.

The State Government shall adopt appropriate measures to promote public health in the State; provide adequate budget at the State, District, Block and village level for purposes of implementation of the policy. The State shall evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population based health services and programmes. In accordance with the National Public Health Act, 2018, the State Government may, on the recommendation of the SPHA, from time to time, define the powers to be exercised, and the duties to be performed, by any department of the State, the Director of Health Services/Deputy Commissioners or any member of his staff or public health officers, for the purposes of implementation of the policy.

The policy will encourage maximum decentralization and localization of planning and implementation process. To facilitate this process, the State Authority along with the respective District Authority will organize consultations with the grassroots organizations with the objective to identify the local health needs through the platform of Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC), which would assist in formulation of the Block, District and State Public Health plans.

### **7.4 Disability Adjusted Life Year**

The policy will enable the use of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) which is a metric that assesses the overall burden of disease and calculates years lost due to disability. The metric will be used to assess the gap between current health status of residents and the ideal/ optimal health status.

There will be focus on healthcare to see maximum impact where data and AI will be used to assess areas for prioritization. There will be prioritization of investments based on DALY

and cost-effectiveness evaluation to promote healthy and productive lives for residents in the State.

## **8. OTHER FOCAL POINTS OF THE POLICY**

### **8.1 Addressing Tuberculosis**

Meghalaya has a number of endemic diseases that need immediate addressing. The policy will address issues such as tuberculosis which is a major concern in the State and come up with comprehensive solutions to bring the disease under control. Although the State follows the National TB elimination programme (NTEP), it has been noted that at a field level, the programme has raised certain concerns with treatment adherence among patients due to multiple reasons like inadequate monitoring, lack of community participation, myths, misconceptions and issues related to alcoholism. Death rate due to T.B. in the year 2019 and 2020 is 4% (245 deaths out of 5674 total notified T.B cases & 139 deaths out of total 3775 notified TB cases respectively (*source NIKSHAY*). The policy will enable better transmission of information from frontline workers to state leadership so that NTEP could be customized and adapted to the specific needs of the State to achieve the vision of Government of India on T.B. elimination by 2025.

### **8.2 Sensitization and awareness creation against stigmatization of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections**

According to a report by NACO, Meghalaya has the third highest number of HIV cases in India with 0.76% of the population living with the disease. Stigmatization against HIV patients is still a great source of concern in Meghalaya. The policy will address the issue by taking measures to disseminate information and creating awareness. Sensitization of communities will also play a major factor in removing the fear of HIV; this will involve a greater involvement of grassroots organizations.

Meghalaya has one of the highest percentage of syphilis cases in the country and as per HIV Surveillance Sentinel, 2017, 1.03% of all pregnant women have tested positive for the infection; the policy will address the issue by creating awareness and sensitizing the public on the sexually transmitted infection.

### **8.3 Addressing Cancer in the State**

According to the *Cancer Statistics, 2020: Report from National Cancer Registry Programme, India*, it been shown that the East Khasi District in the State has the highest relative proportion of cancers associated with the use of tobacco (70.4 per cent for males and 46.5 per cent for females) in the country. The report also states that the sites of cancer in the North East region are nasopharynx, hypopharynx, esophagus, stomach, liver, gall



bladder, larynx, lung and cervix uteri. Because of the lack of infrastructure for specialized treatment of cancers in the region, patients prefer to travel outside the region. This is a great matter of concern for the State and the policy will aim to address this by strengthening the health infrastructure and propelling a mechanism for quality healthcare services for cancer patients.

As cancer is not a notifiable disease, there are many challenges that are faced during in data collection. The report suggests that data can be linked with Ayushman Bharat and the HIS can improve cancer registration, follow up and outcome.

The report also suggests that local cultural and lifestyle choices may have contributed to heterogeneity in cancer incidence patterns and differences in India (as seen with widespread tobacco use in Meghalaya). The policy would proactively give awareness and sensitization to the population and through various campaigns, make the residents aware of the dangers of certain dangerous habits that could lead to cancer.

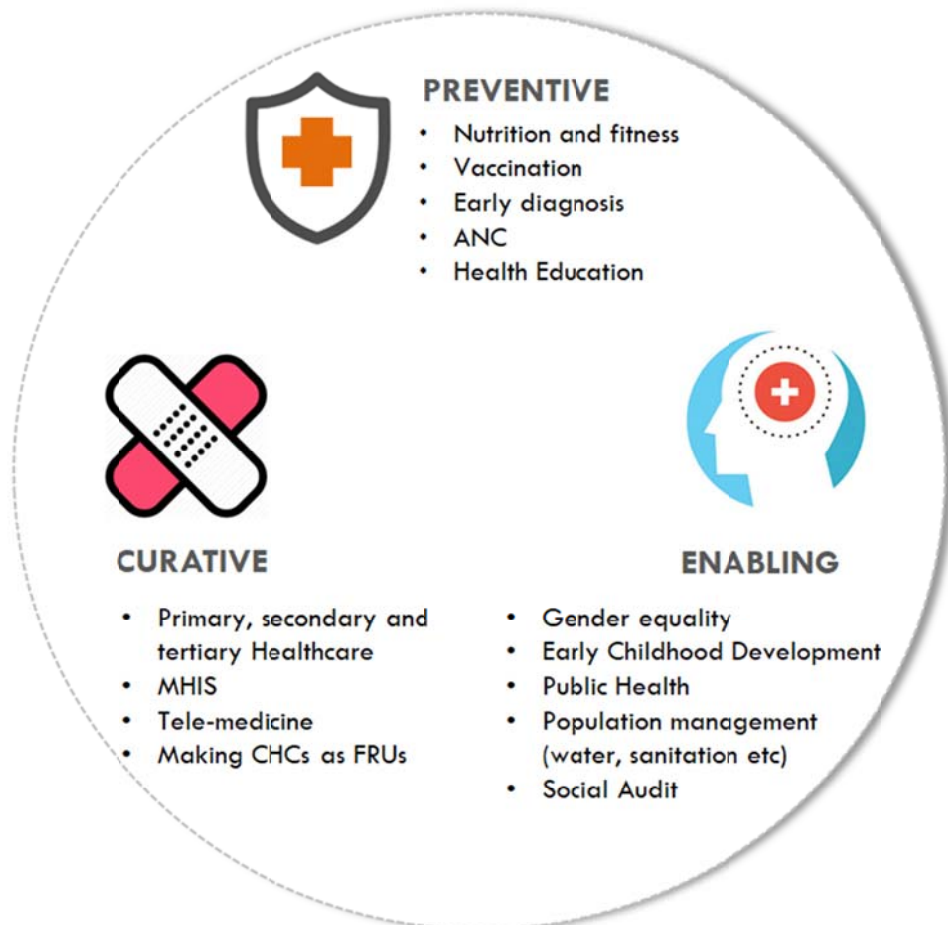
#### **8.4 Disaster Management and epidemics such as COVID-19**

The entire world is witnessing the havoc wreaked by COVID-19 and this has shown that there is a immediate need to have a policy which addresses deadly outbreaks and diseases. The policy aims to take effective measures to prevent, treat and control epidemic and endemic diseases and will lay down specific standards and norms for safety and quality assurance of all aspects of healthcare. It will address issues such as disease outbreaks and public health emergencies and ensure that the State is prepared for any emergency care in a disaster situation.

With Meghalaya prone to natural disaster deaths such as lightning strikes, the policy will include provisions for treatment of persons that have been affected by various natural disasters (floods, earthquakes).

Issues such as snake and animal bites are largely common in the rural landscapes, the policy will address these issues by ensuring that medication and treatment is easily and readily available in CHCs and PHCs. The policy will also allow for training of the village communities on how to quickly respond to such threats so as to minimize any health risks.

## ANNEXURE 1



*Fig: The illustration above shows the holistic approach of the 3-dimensional positive healthcare model of Meghalaya*

## ANNEXURE 2

*The table below indicates proposed diet plan for residents to ensure proper nutrition as recommended by World Health Organization*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Diet Plan</b>	<b>Additional remarks</b>
<b>For Babies And Young Children</b>	<p><b>BREAST FEEDING</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From birth to 6 months babies, should be breastfed whenever the child is hungry</li> <li>2. At 6 months, introduce a variety of safe and nutritious foods which should complement breastfeeding. Breastfeeding should continue till 2 years of age.</li> <li>3. Do not add salt or sugars to foods for babies and young children</li> </ol>	<p>On its own, breast milk provides all the nutrients and fluids that babies need for their first 6 months of healthy growth and development. Exclusively breastfed babies have better resistance against common childhood illnesses such as diarrhea, respiratory infections and ear infections. In later life, those who were breastfed as infants are less likely to become overweight or obese, or to suffer from non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.</p>
<b>Children and Adults</b>	<p><b>STAPLE FOODS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eat a combination of varied foods for a well-balanced diet, including staple foods (e.g. cereals such as wheat, barley, rye, maize or rice, or starchy tubers or roots such as potato, yam, taro or cassava), legumes (e.g. lentils, beans), vegetables, fruit and foods from animals sources (e.g. meat, fish, eggs and milk)</li> </ol>	<p>Eating a variety of whole (i.e. unprocessed) and fresh foods every day helps children and adults to obtain the right amounts of essential nutrients. It also helps them to avoid a diet that is high in sugars, fats and salt, which can lead to unhealthy weight gain (i.e. overweight and obesity) and no communicable diseases.</p>
	<p><b>FRUITS AND VEGETABLES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables</li> <li>2. For snacks, choose raw vegetables</li> </ol>	<p>Fruits and vegetables are important sources of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre, plant protein and</p>

	<p>and fresh fruit, rather than foods that are high in sugars, fats or salt (processed foods)</p> <p>3. Avoid overcooking vegetables and fruit as this can lead to the loss of important vitamins</p> <p>4. When using canned or dried vegetables and fruit, choose varieties without added salt and sugars</p>	<p>antioxidants. People whose diets are rich in vegetables and fruit have a significantly lower risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and certain types of cancer.</p>
	<p><b>MODERATE AMOUNT OF FATS AND OILS</b></p> <p>1. Use unsaturated vegetable oils (e.g. mustard oil)</p> <p>2. Choose white meat (e.g. poultry) and fish, which are generally low in fats, in preference to red meat</p> <p>3. Eat only limited amounts of processed meats because these are high in fat and salt</p> <p>4. Where possible, opt for low-fat or reduced 'fat versions of milk and dairy products</p> <p>5. Avoid processed foods that contain industrially produced trans-fat</p>	<p>Fats and oils are concentrated sources of energy, and eating too much fat, particularly the wrong kinds of fat, can be harmful to health.</p>
	<p><b>REDUCE SUGAR AND SALT INTAKE</b></p> <p>1. When preparing food, limit the amount of salt and high-sodium condiments (e.g. soy sauce and fish sauce)</p> <p>2. Limit intake of aerated drinks and drinks that are high in sugars</p> <p>4. Choose fresh fruits instead of sweet snacks</p>	<p>People who have a higher sodium intake have a greater risk of high blood pressure, which can increase their risk of heart disease and stroke. Similarly, diets which are high in sugar have a greater risk of obesity and an increased risk of tooth decay. People with diets with low sugar and sodium intake reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases such as heart disease and stroke.</p>

### ANNEXURE 3

The table below shows the different stages of life along with a general summary of health parameters that should be followed by all residents

#### INDICATORS TO MEASURE POSITIVE HEALTH AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Health parameters</b>
Neonatal	0 to 4 weeks	The neonatal period is the first four weeks of the child's life. It is the time where changes are very rapid. Many critical events can occur in this period.	To ensure that every child thrives to reach their full potential, we must focus on improving care around the time of birth and the first week of life. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Skin to Skin Care or Kangaroo Mother Care of 6 to 8 hours for 28 days continuously should be encouraged.</li> <li>2. Extensive Breast feeding</li> <li>3. Immunization</li> </ol> *At Birth- BCG, OPV-0, Hepatitis B-0 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Wash practices should be according to the advice of the health practitioners</li> <li>5. Clean dry cord care is recommended for newborns born in health facilities and at home</li> </ol>
Newborn	4 weeks to 1 year	During this development stage, babies' bodies and brain are learning to live in the outside world.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Breastfeeding</li> <li>2. After 6 months the baby can be fed with (formula), should also include certain nutritionally-dense semi-solids. At this stage, the baby's body is efficiently producing an apt amount of digestive enzymes to digest starch. After the completion of six months babies can be introduced to other soft food such as banana puree, mash potatoes, etc</li> <li>3. Immunization</li> </ol> *At 6 weeks- fIPV-1, OPV-1, Penta-1, Rotavirus-1, PCV-1. *At 10 weeks- OPV2, RVV-2, Penta2, *At 14 weeks- OPV3, RVV-3, Penta3, fIPV-2, PCV-2 *At 9 months- MMR-1, /MR/Measles, JE Vaccine-1, PCV-3, Vit. A-1
Toddler	12 months to 24 months	Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investing in the first 1,000 days from conception to a child's second birthday shapes the future of the State. Ending stunting and other forms of malnutrition saves lives, improves health and prospects for children, and improves overall development progress. This makes the fight against</li> </ol>

		<p>crawling, walking, or jumping). During the second year, toddlers are moving around more, and are aware of themselves and their surroundings. Their desire to explore new objects and people also is increasing.</p>	<p>malnutrition a national imperative.  <b>2.Immunization</b>  *At 16 to 24 months- OPV Booster, DPT 1st Booster, Measles/ MR/ MMR-2, JE Vaccine-2</p>
Pre-Schooler	2 to 5 years	<p>The period of the most rapid development of motor behaviors is between the ages of 2 to 5 years</p>	<p><b>1.</b> The ages between 2 and 5 are often called the preschool years. During these years, children change from clumsy toddlers into lively explorers of their world. A child develops physically, emotionally and socially.  <b>2.</b> Learning what is normal for children this age can help you spot problems early or feel better about how your child is doing.  <b>3. Routine medical visit</b>  The best thing to do for the child is to show love and affection but there are many other ways to also help preschoolers grow and learn:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer your child healthy and nutritious foods.</li> <li>• Make time for your child to be active.</li> <li>• Read and talk to your child.</li> <li>• Help your child get enough rest.</li> <li>• Help your child play with other children.</li> <li>• Teach different skills</li> <li>• Set limits that help your child feel safe.</li> </ul> <b>3.Immunization</b>  *At 5 to 6 years- DPT 2nd Booster</p>
School age child	6 to 12 years	<p>School-age children want to be independent, but family relationships are</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Ages 6 to 12, is characterized by a slow, steady rate of physical growth. However, cognitive, emotional, and social development occurs at a tremendous rate. To achieve optimal growth and development, children need to eat a variety of</p>

		<p>still the most important influence on development. At 6-12 years, expect sophisticated play, stronger friendships, tricky emotions, improved thinking and physical skills, and more.</p>	<p>healthy foods and participate in physical activity.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Physical activity can give children a feeling of accomplishment, reduce the risk of certain diseases (e.g., coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, diabetes mellitus), if children continue to be active during adulthood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote mental health. As children grow and develop, their motor skills increase, giving them an opportunity to participate in a variety of physical activities. Children may try different physical activities and establish an interest that serves as the foundation for lifelong participation in physical activity</li> </ul> <p><b>3.</b> Immunization *At 10 years- Td-1</p>
Adolescent	13 to 19 years	<p>Adolescence—the transition period between childhood and adulthood—encompasses ages 13 to 19. It is a time of tremendous change and discovery. During these years, physical, emotional, and intellectual growth occurs at a dizzying speed, challenging the teenager to adjust to a new body, social identity, and expanding world view.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> For adolescents' future lives – support for establishing healthy behaviours in adolescence (e.g. diet, physical activity and, if sexually active, use of contraceptives) and reduction of harmful exposures, conditions and behaviours (e.g. air pollution, obesity and alcohol and tobacco use) will help set a pattern of healthy living for adolescents.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Immunization *At 16 years- Td-2</p> <p><b>3.</b> During the adolescent period it is also necessary to teach them life skills which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking and creative thinking.</li> <li>• Decision making and problem solving.</li> <li>• Communication skills and interpersonal relations.</li> <li>• Coping with emotions and stress.</li> <li>• Self-awareness and empathy.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.</b> Yearly health checkup is also important for adolescents.</p>
20 to 60 years	<b>Adulthood</b> , the period in the human lifespan in	Adulthood	<p><b>1. Screening test and immunization scheduled for men ages 50 and older</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly general exam</li> <li>• Thyroid THS (Test) Every five years</li> </ul>

	<p>which full physical and intellectual maturity have been attained.</p> <p><b>Adulthood</b> is divided into three stages beginning at age 20 or 21 years. Middle age, commencing at about 40 years, followed by old age at about 60 years.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Blood Pressure measurement at least every two years</li> <li>•Regularly check cholesterol level</li> <li>•Bone density Screening- to discuss with clinician if they are at increased risk because of previous bone fractures or other factors which are not necessary for other men</li> <li>•Diabetes screening- to discuss with clinician for type 2 of diabetes. If the blood pressure is higher than 140/80 or if they can use medication to control blood pressure</li> <li>•Digital rectal exam should be done once a year during</li> <li>• To discuss with the clinicians on other health related issues such as mental health screening, hearing test. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Routine dental exam and cleaning</li> <li>•At age 65 on time pneumonia vaccine</li> <li>•Yearly influenza vaccine</li> </ul> </li> <li>•Get a Td booster every 10 years; one booster after age 50 should be with Tdap, and the rest with Td.</li> <li>•Herpes zoster vaccine for shingles-Once only at age 60 or later; discuss with clinician.</li> <li>•Mole exam-Have this done during your routine physical or separately by a dermatologist.</li> <li>•Sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests-Both partners should be tested for STIs and HIV before initiating intercourse. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Healthy eating habit</li> <li>3. Physical exercise</li> <li>4. Adequate Sleep</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>Screening tests and immunization schedule for WOMEN</b></p> <p><b>1. TESTS/IMMUNIZATIONS for women ages 50-64</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•General exam; weight and height- to discuss with clinician</li> <li>•Thyroid (TSH) test- Every 5 years</li> <li>•HIV test- At least once to find our your HIV status; ask your clinician if repeat testing is necessary</li> <li>•Blood pressure measurement-At least every 2 years; at least yearly (or per your clinician's advice)</li> </ul>
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			<p>if you have high blood pressure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Cholesterol test- Discuss with clinician; many groups recommend screening every 5 years</li> <li>•Bone density screen- Discuss with clinician and at age 65 years and older bone density screen should be done at least once and consult the clinician if repeated screening is required.</li> <li>•Blood glucose test- Every 3 years</li> <li>•Mammogram- Every 2 years; discuss with clinician</li> <li>•Clinical breast exam- Discuss with clinician</li> <li>•Pap smear-Every 5 years; if HPV screening is unavailable, undergo pap smear every 3 years and for ages 65 and older to discuss with clinician.</li> <li>•Pelvic exam- Every 1–3 years</li> <li>•Chlamydia test- Obtain if you have new or multiple partners</li> <li>•Sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests- Both partners should be tested for STIs and HIV before initiating intercourse</li> <li>•Mental health screening- Discuss with clinician</li> <li>•Colorectal health; use one of the following three methods: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fecal occult blood test should be done on a yearly basis and for those 65 years and older to discuss with clinician</li> <li>2. Flexible sigmoidoscopy to be done Every 5 years and for those 65 years and older to discuss with clinician</li> <li>3. Colonoscopy should be done Every 10 years and for those 65 years and older to discuss with clinician</li> </ol> </li> <li>•Complete eye exam- Every 2–4 years or as advised by clinician and for those 65 and older every 1–2 years</li> <li>•Hearing test - Every 3 years</li> <li>•Mole exam- Clinical exam or physical; self-exam monthly</li> <li>•Dental exam- Routinely; discuss with dentist</li> <li>•Influenza vaccine- Yearly</li> <li>•Pneumococcal vaccine- Not applicable and for those 65 years and above one time only</li> <li>•Tetanus-diphtheria (Td) or tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) booster Every 10 years; one booster after age 50 should be with Tdap, and the rest with Td.</li> <li>•Herpes zoster vaccine for shingles</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Once only at 60 or later; discuss with clinician</li> <li>2. Healthy eating habit</li> <li>3. Physical exercise</li> <li>4. Adequate Sleep</li> </ul>
Pregnancy	From conception till birth (40 weeks)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Patient should see a doctor at least four times during pregnancy; the first at around 12 weeks, second between 24 to 28 weeks, third visit at 32 weeks and the fourth visit at 36 weeks.</li> <li>•Patient should be given folic acid supplementation to prevent Neural Tube defects.</li> <li>•Patient should visit health facility on due date irrespective of labour pains</li> <li><b>Patient should undergo routine tests such as:</b></li> <li>•Haemoglobin estimation</li> <li>•Routine examination of urine</li> <li>•Serological test for syphilis, HIV and Hep-B</li> <li>•Monitoring of blood glucose levels</li> <li>•ABO and Rh grouping</li> <li>•Thyroid functioning test</li> <li>•Patient should undergo tetanus immunization (2 doses of Td during pregnancy)</li> </ul>